

## **STATEMENT OF STEVE MARZOLF**

Public Safety Communications Coordinator  
Commonwealth of Virginia

before the  
Federal Communications Commission

### **Wireless E911 Coordination Initiative**

Tuesday, April 29, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission, for this opportunity to appear before you today. I am Steve Marzolf, Public Safety Communications Coordinator for the Commonwealth of Virginia. I am also the Secretary of the National Association of State 9-1-1 Administrators, also known as NASNA. Though it has only been the last eight years of my seventeen-year career in public safety that I have worked on wireless enhanced 9-1-1, it already seems like a lifetime.

Virginia was an early entrant into wireless E-911, passing its first legislation in 1998. The legislation created a statewide wireless E-911 surcharge of \$0.75 and a Board to administer the fund. I was an original member of that Board. The legislation established cost recovery for both the public safety answering points (PSAPs) and wireless service providers (WSPs). Though it had no full time staff, the Board established guidelines to provide cost recovery and issued its first payments in July 1999. In January 2000, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation to overhaul the wireless E-911 program. The new legislation expanded the membership of the Board to fourteen, which includes seven local government, four state government and three industry representatives. The legislation also established the Division of Public Safety Communications, which I now head, as the staff for the Board and coordinator of 9-1-1 activities within the Commonwealth.

Since its inception in 1998, the Board has provided nearly \$58.5 million to the PSAPs in Virginia with another \$18 million approved for the coming fiscal year. During this same period, the Board has provided over \$7 million of cost recovery to the WSPs. Though significantly less than the amount of funding originally requested by the WSPs, this represents the actual cost incurred by the providers excluding location measurement units, which are not funded by the Board. The wireless E-911 surcharge currently generates approximately \$2.5 million each month or \$30 million each year. Due to the early delays of deployment, the fund had accumulated a significant balance, which allowed us to provide funding to localities to deploy landline E-911 and to conduct a statewide mapping project that has produced digital aerial photography for all 45,000 square miles of Virginia. Yes, money was also transferred from the fund to help with Virginia's \$6 billion budget shortfall, but this will not impact the deployment of wireless E-911.

With this groundwork laid, we are now at a very exciting point of our development. Virginia is finally seeing the results from these investments. Every of Virginia's 134 localities has committed to deployment of Phase I and Phase II. We currently have 315 Phase I deployments in 91 localities and 42 Phase II deployments in 21 localities. Most exciting of all is that we finally feel as though all of the major roadblocks have been overcome and that progress is being made. As we look back at our success thus far and try to determine what we have learned, several key factors are apparent.

First, and probably most important, is the presence of strong leadership and the commitment to the delivery of wireless E-911. Someone or group needs to take the leadership role to be the advocate for the service and the point of contact for all the stakeholders. This person or group may be at the state or local level, but whichever level they represent will determine the extent of the success (state or local). In Virginia, the Wireless E-911 Services Board serves this role. They are focused on building a collaborative environment, removing obstacles to deployment and fostering a commitment to deployment from all stakeholders. But, the Board can only be successful if all of the stakeholders are committed to deployment of the service. When looking at the deployments in Virginia and around the nation, it is easy to see where the commitment exists and where it does not.

Though to varying degrees, all of our PSAPs have committed to the deployment of service and are actively working toward it. Concerned that some of the smaller localities lacked the resources and expertise to manage a project of this technical scope, the Board has offered a project management consultant to each PSAP to assist with the deployment effort. The Board did not want to create a situation where the more urban, resource rich PSAPs were able to deploy the service while the rural, less wealthy PSAPs were not. The project management assistance has allowed even the smallest PSAPs to deploy the service.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention the support and commitment we have received from our local exchange carriers, Verizon and Sprint. They have been proactive with system upgrades, have not sought per-call or per-subscriber tariffs and have been a strong member of the deployment team almost from the start of the project. I know many other states and PSAPs have complained to you about the local exchange carrier being an impediment to progress but I am very pleased to say that that is not the case for us.

Finally, of course, we owe our success to the commitment of the WSPs. Like the PSAPs, the level of commitment varies among the companies. Some have struggled to select and deploy location technology while others have gotten to a point where deployment is rather routine. From our first Phase II deployment with Verizon Wireless in April 2002 in York County to the recent deployments that have brought some WSPs, like Alltel, up-to-date on their deployment, all of the stakeholders have worked closely together to ensure that the work gets done.

Beyond leadership and commitment, our success has also been enhanced by the availability of sufficient resources. Due in large part to the early enactment of surcharge

legislation in 1998, the fund has not only allowed the Wireless E-911 Services Board to fund the deployment of service, but it has also provided incentive for the stakeholders to deploy . Of the \$58.5 million provided to PSAPs thus far, over \$37.4 million has gone for additional personnel to handle the wireless E-911 calls in PSAPs that have been burdened by increasing call loads. To receive this funding, the PSAP needed only commit to and deploy wireless E-911. This and the project management assistance have provided an excellent incentive to the PSAPs that may not have otherwise moved forward as quickly.

In summary, Virginia has been successful due to the leadership and commitment of all of the stakeholders in the process. Starting at the top with Governor Warner and the General Assembly, E-911 for both landline and wireless is an important public safety priority. As a result, it receives the resources necessary to succeed. The leadership of the Wireless E-911 Services Board has fostered an environment of cooperation and incentives to keep all of the stakeholders involved in the process. The PSAPs, local exchange carriers and WSPs are all committed to providing the best possible service to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

While we have had a great deal of success and the future looks promising, much work still needs to be done. In particular, the lack of standards especially for Phase II has caused frustration for those of us on the leading edge. Inconsistent data formats, inability to differentiate a Phase I and Phase II call and incomplete information can confuse the call taker and slow down the processing of the call. We are hopeful that these issues will be resolved as the service evolves and is improved.

Funding is still a major issue in several other states. Many of these same states lack state level coordination. While service may still be deployed without state coordination, in many of these cases, success is limited to a local area and is not statewide. As we learned, statewide deployment requires statewide coordination. After 15 years of only local coordination, Virginia had 37 localities without landline E-911. Since the creation of a statewide coordination effort and provision of funding, 18 of the 37 now have landline E-911 and all are scheduled to deploy in the next 18 months. Similarly, nationwide E-911 will require national 9-1-1 coordination. I, therefore, support the recommendation in Dale Hatfield's report for a national 9-1-1 office. This office should not preempt state programs, but should instead support the existing programs and provide encouragement and incentive to create programs in states where they do not exist.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. While forums like this provide excellent opportunities to discuss successes and problems, they must be followed up with action. We know what needs to be done. It is being done in states like Virginia, Vermont, North Carolina, Tennessee and Rhode Island, just to name a few. With everyone's continued hard work and commitment, we can build systems with continual and sustainable success for everyone.